



Old Graham's Philatelic Tales No. 3

In 1858, Charles Connell was appointed Postmaster General of the British colony of New Brunswick. Sometime in the latter part of 1859, the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick asked him to produce stamps in their newly adopted decimal currency. It was a time when increasing trade with the United States was forcing the Canadian colonies to institute decimal currencies which would be more familiar to their American neighbours. He had to produce new stamps to the value of one cent, five cents, ten cents and twelve and a half cents, and at his suggestion, a seventeen cent value. The stamps had to be ready by the first of May 1860. Prior to Christmas of 1859, Mr Connell travelled to New York where he met with officials of the American Bank Note Company with whom he had contracted to produce the new issue. Most of the designs were selected without difficulty,

apart from the five cent value, which would be for domestic first class post. One version of the story is that the printers themselves selected the design showing the Postmaster General, rather than Queen Victoria, who appeared on two designs of the set. The question here would be where would they have got Mr. Connell's likeness from? The other is that this was the instruction of the man himself. The designs were certainly not revealed to his superiors prior to their arrival in the colony a few days before the 1st of May 1860. The initial order of the five cent value was for 50,000 copies.

The fat was in the fire. The other designs were authorised for issue, but the whole issue was delayed until the 15th of May, while a new five cent stamp was ordered "bearing the likeness of the Queen". (This would not actually arrive until July 1860). Mr Connell resigned his post on the 18th of May, and purchased all copies of the stamp for the sum of Thirty One Pounds and Fifteen Shillings. Now the mystery deepens a little more; Mr Connell had offered to buy the stamps to avoid criticism, and indeed they were MOSTLY burned, sheet by sheet, in his front garden, but apparently not until several years later. Certainly his two daughters, each received a sheet of 100 each, but they also burned theirs at some unknown date. Some stamps were however given away to friends.

So what happened to this unfortunate gentleman who never saw his face passing through the postal system? He lost his salary of six hundred pounds a year, but rebounded politically as an ardent supporter of Canadian Confederation, and became a Member of Parliament representing part of New Brunswick in the new Canadian parliament. He died in 1873 at his house in Woodstock, New Brunswick. That house is now a museum.

And what of the stamps? Experts believe that there are about 50-60 in existence, none used postally. The stamps have been counterfeited as well.

The moral of the story? A little modesty can avoid a whole heap of trouble.